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Message Text

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65
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 SAM-01

DHA-02 FEA-01 /086 W
---------- 019384
R 151640Z MAR 76
FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2026
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

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E.O.: 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, TS, LY
SUBJ: GOT REACTS TO LIBYAN EXPULSIONS TO CALM DOMESTIC FEARS

REF : TUNIS 1746

1. SUMMARY: WHILE LIBYAN EXPULSIONS OF TUNISIANS CONTINUE, GOT CONTINUES TO PORTRAY THEM AS CAPRICIOUS ACTS IN VIOLATION OF BILATERAL AGREEMENTS. GOT OFFICIALS HAVE EMPHASIZED EFFORTS TO ASSIST REINTEGRATION OF TUNISIANS INTO ECONOMY AND TO PREVENT HARDSHIP. TUNISIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT HAS JOINED GOT IN ATTACKING LIBYAN AUTHORITIES AND HAS SENT DENUCIATION TO ARAB TRADE UNION ORGANIZATION. WHILE AFFAIR HAS BEEN MADE TO LOOK SERIOUS FOR DOMESTIC TUNISIAN AUDIENCE, GOT AND LARG HAVE NOT ESCALATED DISPUTE INTO OTHER, MORE IMPORTANT AREAS OF BILATERAL RELATIONS. OVER 40,000 TUNISIAN WORKERS REMAIN IN LIBYA AND TUNISIAN PARTICIPATION IN TRIPOLI INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR HAS CONTINUED UNDISTURBED.
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END SUMMARY.

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2. TUNISIAN PRESS CONTINUES TO CARRY REPORTS OF TUNISIAN WORKERS BEING EXPELLED FROM LIBYA. REPORTS PLACE BLAME FOR SITUATION ON CAPRICIOUSNESS OF LIBYAN AUTHORITIES AND ASSERT THAT LARG ACTION CARRIED OUT IN VIOLATION OF FORMAL AGREEMENTS BETWEEN GOT AND LARG. TUNISIANS EXPELLED NOW NUMBER OVER 1500. GOT CONTINUES TO ASSERT THAT NO DISTINCTION IS MADE BY LARG BETWEEN ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS AND PROPERLY DOCUMENTED WORKERS DESPITE LIBYAN EXPLANATION HEARD HERE ON RADIO TRIPOLI THAT ONLY UNDOCUMENTED TUNISIANS ARE BEING EXPELLED.

3. GOT AUTHORITIES ARE GIVING HIGH ATTENTION TO SITUATION IN THEIR PUBLIC STATEMENTS. GREATEST ATTENTION IS DEVOTED TO ASSURING PUBLIC THAT GOVERNMENT WILL ASSIST RETURNEES IN REINTEGRATING INTO LOCAL-ECONOMY. MEDENINE GOVERNOR SALEM BOUMIZA CLAIMED THAT HIS REGION NEEDED THE MANPOWER AND WAS HAPPY TO SEE THE WORKERS COME HOME. HE CITED LIBYAN INTEREST IN RECEIVING ADDITIONAL WORKERS AS EVIDENCE THAT EXPULSIONS ARE POLITICALLY, NOT ECONOMICALLY MOTIVATED. HABIB BOURGUIBA, JR., WHO HAS LARGELY BEEN OUT OF THE PUBLIC EYE RECENTLY, COMMENTED PUBLICLY ON EXPULSIONS OVER WEEKEND AND DESCRIBED LIBYAN TREATMENT OF TUNISIAN WORKERS AS "REPRESSIVE" AND "WORSE THAN EVEN COLONIALISM DARED INFLICT." HE SAID IT IS TIME FOR LIBYAN AUTHORITIES TO REALIZE TUNISIA IS NOT FOR SALE AND ADDED THAT AFFAIR HAS POSITIVE SIDE IN THAT TUNISIANS WILL SEE HOW "PEACEFUL, WARM AND FRATERNAL" LIFE IS IN TUNISIA COMPARED TO OTHER COUNTRIES.

4. GENERAL UNION OF TUNISIAN WORKERS (UGTT) JOINED GOT IN DENOUNCING LIBYAN EXPULSIONS WITH MESSAGE TO THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF ARAB WORKERS. THE UGTT CALLED THE EXPULSION OF WORKERS "LEGALLY" IN LIBYA DEPLORABLE AND A VIOLATION OF PRINCIPLES OF ARAB BROTHERHOOD, GOT-LARG BILATERAL AGREEMENTS, AND OF ARAB LABOR ORGANIZATION RESOLUTIONS ON THE TREATMENT OF IMMIGRANT LABOR. THE UGTT ASKED THAT NECESSARY STEPS BE TAKEN TO END THIS VIOLATION OF HUMAN DIGNITY.

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5. SOME TUNISIANS TELL US THEY BELIEVE MOST DEPORTEES ARE ONLY SEASONAL LABORERS WHOSE JOBS HAVE ENDED ANYWAY. THE SUDDEN RUSH OF DEPORTEES, HOWEVER, AND THE APPARENTLY ROUGH TREATMENT ACCORDED SOME AMONG THEM, SUPPORTS NOTION THAT LARG IS USING EXPULSIONS TO EXPRESS IRRITATION AT GOT.

6. COMMENT: GOT TREATMENT OF EXPULSIONS APPEARS PRIMWRILY DESIGNED TO ASSURE PUBLIC, AND PARTICULARLY RETURNING

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WORKERS, THAT ECONOMIC HARDSHIP WILL NOT RESULT FROM
LIBYAN ACTION. GOT APPEARS EQUALLY CONCERNED TO PLACE
BLAME FOR ANY PROBLEMS THAT MAY RESULT ON LIBYAN
AUTHORITIES VIA ALLEGATIONS THAT BILATERAL AGREEMENTS
ARE BEING BROKEN. DESPITE BOUMIZA'S SOOTHING WORDS
ABOUT MANPOWER SHORTAGES IN MEDENINE, THE AREAS WHERE
MOST OF THESE TUNISIANS COME FROM AND WILL RETURN TO
ARE OTHER GOVERNORATES WHICH SUFFER CHRONIC UNEMPLOYMENT.
WITH ABOUT 40,000 TUNISIANS REMAINING IN LIBYA, PRESUMABLY
NOT UNDER HARASSMENT, AND IN VIEW OF REPORTS HERE THAT
TUNISIA DAY AT THE TRIPOLI INTERNATIONAL FAIR TOOK PLACE
NORMALLY LAST WEEK, IT IS CLEAR LARG HAS NOT LAUNCHED
AN ALL-STOPS-PULLED CAMPAIGN AGAINST GOT. THE TWO GENUINE
ISSUES BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS--WHO GETS THE OIL ON
THE DISPUTED CONTINENTAL SHELF AND LIBYAN SPONSORED
POLITICAL PLOTS WITHIN TUNISIA--REMAIN ALMOST TOTALLY
UNMENTIONED IN THE MEDIA HERE.
SEELYE

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